

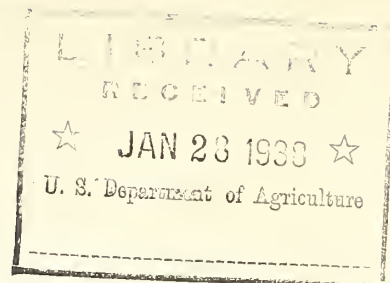
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ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TRENDS  
in  
4-H FOODS AND NUTRITION PROJECTS



A radio talk by Miriam Birdseye, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H club radio program, January 8, 1938 and broadcast by a network of associate NBC radio stations.

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Foods club work touches a country girl's life at many vital points. In 1936, the latest year for which we have complete records, over 300,000 club members completed projects in foods and nutrition.

No two States follow the same pattern, but all expect a foods club girl to make herself a demonstration of right feeding and improved health, and if possible to carry through the health examinations and make the corrections which mean so much in years of rapid growth. Foods club girls usually place well in posture and health improvement contests.

Many States now organize their foods projects around planning and preparing simple meals. This provides practice in cooking several different groups of food, in washing dishes, and in meal planning, setting and serving the table, and etiquette. For example, breakfast club girls learn what foods they need every day and those which make a good start for the day's work. They check their food habits and note improvements needed. They prepare dried and fresh fruits, cereals and eggs in different forms, toast, quick breads, and cocoa. Each member prepares or helps to prepare, several simple breakfasts at home, and the club group serves a company breakfast. Mothers' Day breakfasts are very popular.

More advanced work is given through the dinner or meal preparation clubs. Canning of vegetables and meats suitable for such meals is sometimes included in these projects.

214 girls in one Mississippi county reported 8,642 meals prepared and nearly 9,000 meals served - more than 40 meals per member. Many older girls' clubs use entertaining as a basis for studying food preparation, serving, costs, social usages and family relationships. 143 older girls in Colorado each planned 10 different ways of entertaining friends or family, and carried out and reported on four of these plans in detail. They were surprised to see the difference in cost made by planning and ingenuity. These clubs included "hospitality helps" in their exhibit.

One New Hampshire club member prepared 520 different meals in a single year. A member of an advanced Meals for the Family Project assisted at a County Homemakers' Camp by making all the salads for the 40 women attending.

Several States have luncheon club projects which include planning and packing school lunches to be taken from home. Two New Hampshire girls reported packing over 300 lunches each, some of them for other members of the family. Luncheon club members sometimes take over the preparation of

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a noon-day hot dish in school or help to can vegetables for the school lunch. In two Maryland counties club members in 1936 assisted in serving lunches during the three winter months in cooperation with the Red Cross. In another, club girls raised vegetables and preserved products for hot school lunches the following winter.

Some States organize their foods clubs around cooking processes such as baking quick and yeast breads, cookies and cakes; preparing milk dishes, or vegetables, salads or desserts; canning, and making jellies, preserves and pickles. Other States require all club members to produce some food product, like vegetables, eggs or milk, which can be used at home or sold.

Club girls contribute to family health and savings and to their own bank accounts through their work in canning, which they often combine with gardening. Interest and skill grow with the years. The Nebraska State Canning Champion for 1936 reported: (quote)

"I became a 4-H canning club member just before I reached 10 years of age. Some years, drought prevented our organizing for canning, but in my 9 years of club work I have canned or helped to put up a total of 6,219 quarts of fruits, vegetables and meats, preserves, marmalades and butter, valued at \$2,082.00. I have helped my married sisters, my aunts and my neighbors with their canning and showed many women how to use the pressure cooker. Most of the women I have helped are now using pressure cookers themselves."

Few satisfactions in a country girl's life equal that of surveying a well-planned family canning budget of fine quality fruits, vegetables and meats, arranged in colorful rows, which she has put up herself or which she has planned and helped to can. As you know, a canning budget is a plan for laying by the amount and variety of canned products which will keep the family properly fed throughout non-producing seasons of winter cold or summer drought. Practically all 4-H food preservation work is now done on the budget basis.

Thousands of club girls made money for schooling, clothing or home improvement last year by marketing canned and preserved products along with fresh vegetables from their budget gardens.

Foods club members take to their meetings samples of products made at home, and learn to judge them by carefully prepared score cards. Foods judging work is carried further through county, State and National judging contests. In Oklahoma alone, 7,800 girls received training in judging canned and baked goods in 1936. Such products lend themselves more readily to judging and exhibits than do the more perishable vegetable and meat dishes.

Speaking of exhibits, of course every foods club girl makes an exhibit of her work every year. Recent exhibits at fairs include not only the foods themselves but posters showing meal plans, and family canning budgets for a short period - usually a week in mid-winter.

Some interesting team demonstrations given recently were: Setting the table for different occasions, selecting table linens, arranging center-pieces, table courtesies; judging breads and cake, making whole-wheat breads, making apple jelly with herb variations and various points in canning. Winning teams demonstrated making quick process cheese, the food value and ways of using milk. Other teams have demonstrated "budgeting your health" (planning meals ahead), the emergency shelf of home-canned foods, and preparing meals from home-canned products.

I find State foods and nutrition specialists giving more and more time to training schools for volunteer 4-H club leaders. Last February I attended such a meeting in Kansas. The foods specialist, the agent and the leaders of first year baking clubs spent the day discussing how to give demonstrations, judge products, and exhibits at fairs, and how a leader could adapt the project to the ages, home conditions and financial needs of her girls. The specialist made it seem so worthwhile, so fascinating and so simple to conduct a baking club that I was tempted to throw up my job in the Federal office to become a Kansas foods club leader.

Here are just a few reasons why I hope many thousands of girls will be enjoying foods club work in 1938:

1. Through foods club work you can improve your health, looks and disposition.
2. Through the food preservation budget you contribute to the family health and pocketbook.
3. Through expert cooking and canning you can earn money for personal expenses.
4. Most good times in the country center around meals or refreshments enjoyed with friends or neighbors.
5. Mothers! It will be a great day for you when daughter learns to work quickly and tidily in the kitchen!

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